

Sunday School

THE BAPTISM AND TEMPTATION OF JESUS.

Lesson for January 9, 1909.

Matthew 3:13-17 and 4:1-11.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"In that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted."—Heb. 2:18.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M.—Matt. 3:13 to 4:11.

T.—Isa. 61:1-11.

T.—Isa. 11:1-10.

F.—John 1:19-34.

W.—Isa. 42:1-9.

S.—Heb. 4:1-16.

S.—Acts 10:34-43.

SHORTER CATECHISM.

Q.—How is the word made effectual to salvation?

A.—The Spirit of God maketh the reading, but especially the preaching of the word, an effectual means of convincing and converting sinners and of building them up in holiness and comfort through faith unto salvation.

TOPICAL OUTLINE.

Our Lord at the Door of His Ministry—

Baptized by John, vs. 13-15.

Acknowledged by the Spirit and the Father, vs. 16, 17.

Tempted by the devil, ch. 4:1-11.

LESSON COMMENT.

Why should Jesus desire or receive baptism? Not as a sign of his reception into the Church, for he had already been recognized as a member of the Church in the rite of circumcision. Not as a sign of the washing away of any personal sin, for he personally had no sin.

But according to the usage of the Church of that day the induction of a priest into office was marked by baptism. Jesus came as our great high priest. Therefore at the beginning of his official work, God would have him regularly baptized by a priest of the regular tribe of Levi. This baptism was an official recognition by John of the fact that though he was not a descendant of Aaron, yet he was God's high priest.

In this we find a special light upon the reply of Jesus: "Suffer it to be so now, for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness." Let us grasp the special, gospel meaning of that word "righteousness." It means redemption work. Christ seems to say, that as the rules of redemption work called for the induction of a priest by baptism, therefore he must be baptized.

But when we ask what was symbolized by baptism at that day, we find a vivid answer in the words of John: "I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?" John did not need ceremonial baptism. Being six months older than Jesus, and the eldest son of a priest, John had doubtless received the ceremonial baptism of the priesthood six months before. Yet he has "need to be baptized" of Jesus. Obviously the thought in John's mind was of the real baptism, the spiritual influence, that was symbolized by the application of water. As it were to say, I have need of the cleansing work of the Spirit on my soul which thou only canst give. John was speaking of the substance, rather than the ceremony.

In consonance with this view is the comment of John of Damascus who wrote in Greek about the year A. D. 600. He says "John the Baptist was baptized by Jesus" on that occasion. He did not mean that Jesus administered ceremonial baptism to John; but rather that on that day John received a touch of spiritual influence.

And there was enough to produce this influence. Besides the recognition that Jesus, the God-man, was applying to him for recognition, there was also the voice of God the Father, saying, "This is my beloved Son." It could not fail to exercise a powerful influence upon John.

Let us be careful that when we receive the ceremonial baptism we seek also the spiritual baptism and influence.

As John applied the water God the Father added the

spiritual baptism. In an audible voice God spoke, "Thou art my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased." And from that time a new character marked the life of Jesus. From that time he consecrated himself to the active work of the Messiahship. In his first sermon (see Luke 4) he expresses this: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor and to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

In Luke's account of the Baptism one significant expression occurs. It is in chapter 4:1, "Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness" to meet the temptations of Satan. The third chapter told of His baptism; the fourth chapter tells us that from that time Jesus was "full of the Holy Ghost." The baptism had been much more than a mere ceremony.

JUST TODAY.

By M. L. M.

Just let me do my best today,
Nor trouble for tomorrow's care,
Speed Thou my loitering feet away,
Sweet messages for Thee to bear.

Let me not once delay my task
That Thou hast planned for me to do.
The grace, the strength is all I ask,
That I may to the end prove true.

So, if I pass this way no more,
I leave no duty unfulfilled;
No sheaves unbound for heavenly store,
My soul's fair garden-plot untilled.

Give me to see the moments fair,
That bring me golden deeds for Thee,
Grant me not blind to what they bear,
The strength to prove my loyalty.

So, as the passing moments speed,
Oh lead me on to work Thy will!
Of joy I claim no earthly need,
Nor present gain—Thy glory still!

ON THE QUESTION OF FREE WILL.

In the "Sunday School Times" we find a paragraph on free will which is well worth perusal and meditation.

"But no man who has ever sinned, and who is unredeemed, has a free will. He has voluntarily taken a death-poison into his own veins which commits him to eternal death and makes the term 'free will' nothing but an empty, taunting mockery. We see this plainly in those who are besotted in the slavery of sin. What does a drunkard know about free will? We say that he wills, or chooses, to drink, but there is no freedom in his choice. He has got to drink, whether he wants to or not. What is so evident in the besotted sinner is just as true of the sinner who is very respectable, and who has sunk to no such depths. It is not so evident here, but his free will is gone, too. Of course, a sinner, even the sot, can exercise a certain limited amount of 'free will' in the choice of minor and comparatively unimportant details in his life, such as whether he shall put his coat on or take it off. But the freedom of his will is not unlimited; in matters of the spiritual life he forfeited free will with voluntary sin. And there is no such thing as a limited free will. The will is either free or it is not free; if it is limited in any detail, it is not free will.

"In other words, because all have sinned and have come short of the glory of God, free will does not exist save in the lives of those in whom the effects of sin have been done away with by the redeeming power of the Son of God. The will of the unsaved sinner is in slavery to death and the Devil. All that such a one can do is to cry out to God for the will to commit himself to God: and such a cry God always honors."